United Nations A/56/283–S/2001/777

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
9 August 2001

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session
Item 178 of the provisional agenda*
Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Fifty-sixth year

Letter dated 9 August 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The recent letter addressed to you by the Chargé d'affaires of the Syrian Arab Republic contains a series of distortions and inaccuracies that further illustrate the necessity, as I set forth in my letter dated 6 July 2001 (A/56/161-S/2001/673), of seriously questioning the suitability of the Syrian candidature for a seat on the United Nations Security Council. I will endeavour herein to set the record straight.

The Syrian representative, among others, continues to set forth the untenable position that Israel is occupying Lebanese land in the Shab'a farm lands. Israel's position on this has been articulated numerous times, most explicitly in my letter dated 18 April 2001, and there is no need to do so again. Suffice it to say, the United Nations Security Council, *in resolution 1310 (2000), affirmed* that "as of 16 June 2000 Israel had withdrawn its forces from Lebanon in accordance with resolution 425 (1978)". The Syrian position is therefore in contradiction not simply with that of Israel, but more importantly, with that of the Council and the Secretary-General as well.

Moreover, the Syrian representative's allegations of Israeli occupation ring hollow in light of the Syrian Arab Republic's continued occupation of Lebanon. His assertion that all peoples are endowed with the right to resist foreign occupation must also presumably extend to the people of Lebanon, an increasing number of whom have called for the withdrawal of Syrian forces. Moreover, his justification for why Syrian forces had entered Lebanon in the first place — the fact that they "preserved the unity of Lebanon's territory and quenched the fires of the civil war" — is an obvious pretence. The Lebanese civil war has long since ended, and yet the unquenchable Syrian desire for hegemony over Lebanon remains.

With regard to Hizbullah, it need hardly be mentioned that this is an organization widely recognized as responsible for scores of terrorist attacks against Israelis and other nationals. Hizbullah is also the primary source of tension and instability along the Israel-Lebanon border and has been the source of numerous acts

* A/56/150.

01-50618 (E) 100801

of violence and terror, including the kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers on 7 October 2000. The Syrian representative, in referring to this terrorist organization as "a Lebanese party", demonstrates his apparent inability to distinguish between politics and terror. The Syrian Arab Republic, after all, supports international terrorism, serves as host to terrorist headquarters and training facilities, and permits transfers of arms from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Hizbullah operatives in the field to pass through Syrian territory. Clearly, from the Syrian perspective, the use of terrorism as a political instrument is a perfectly legitimate practice; politics and terror are merely two sides of the same coin.

It is for these reasons that the Syrian Arab Republic's candidature for Security Council membership must be carefully scrutinized. Prior membership on the Council should not be considered sufficient grounds for future membership. Rather, it is the policies and actions of States, and their contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security, that should be foremost in considering eligibility for membership in such an important body of the United Nations. In this regard, the verdict is rather clear: the Syrian Arab Republic's occupation of Lebanon and its support for Hizbullah have increased the level of violence and tension along the Israel-Lebanon border and are a destabilizing force in the region.

Israel calls on Member States to carefully consider the Syrian Arab Republic's candidature for membership on the Security Council in light of these facts.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under item 178 of the provisional agenda and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative